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ST. LUKE'S PARISH
IN LINCOLNTON, N.C.

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ST. LUKE'S PARISH
IN LINCOLNTON, N. C.

FOUNDED, NOVEMBER 29, 1841.

**A Record of the first One Hundred Years of
service of the Parish.**



Published by the Vestry of the Church 1941.



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*In memory of
those early pioneers who labored
so lovingly and devotedly to found
ST. LUKE'S PARISH in Lincolnton
this booklet is
affectionately dedicated.*

FOREWORD

THIS booklet is published and sent out by the Vestry of St. Luke's Church in the hope that many may be encouraged and helped in the work today as they realize what a glorious heritage St. Luke's has. The early records are very much duplicated and out of order and due to this it was inadvertently announced that the actual founding of the Parish took place on February 2nd, 1841. We have since discovered that the actual date is November 29th of the same year. We plan to have a Parish Dinner that evening with a final Thanksgiving service of our Centennial year on Sunday, November 30th. At both these functions we hope to have special speakers and details will be announced later.

To all to whom this booklet comes we ask for donations to our Centennial Fund which we will use for the renovation and remodelling of our buildings. The Parish House needs underpinning, a furnace and thorough redecoration if it is to remain useful and attractive. The Rectory needs a furnace and some interior alterations and decorations and the outside should be brick veneered. We are appealing for the Centennial sum of \$10,000 and we believe that if each will do his part we can attain our aim. In the first hundred years of its life the members of St. Luke's Church have contributed largely to the life of community, State and Nation and as we step forward into our second century of service we know that the record of

achievements of this Parish will be as glorious as anything in the past.

We go Forward in Service building upon the healthy foundations laid in the past, counting upon the loyalty and support of members and friends to make St. Luke's a truly spiritual center and a place of power for the upbuilding of the Kingdom of God.

+ +

ST. LUKE'S PARISH IN LINCOLNTON, N. C.

CHURCH OFFICERS 1941

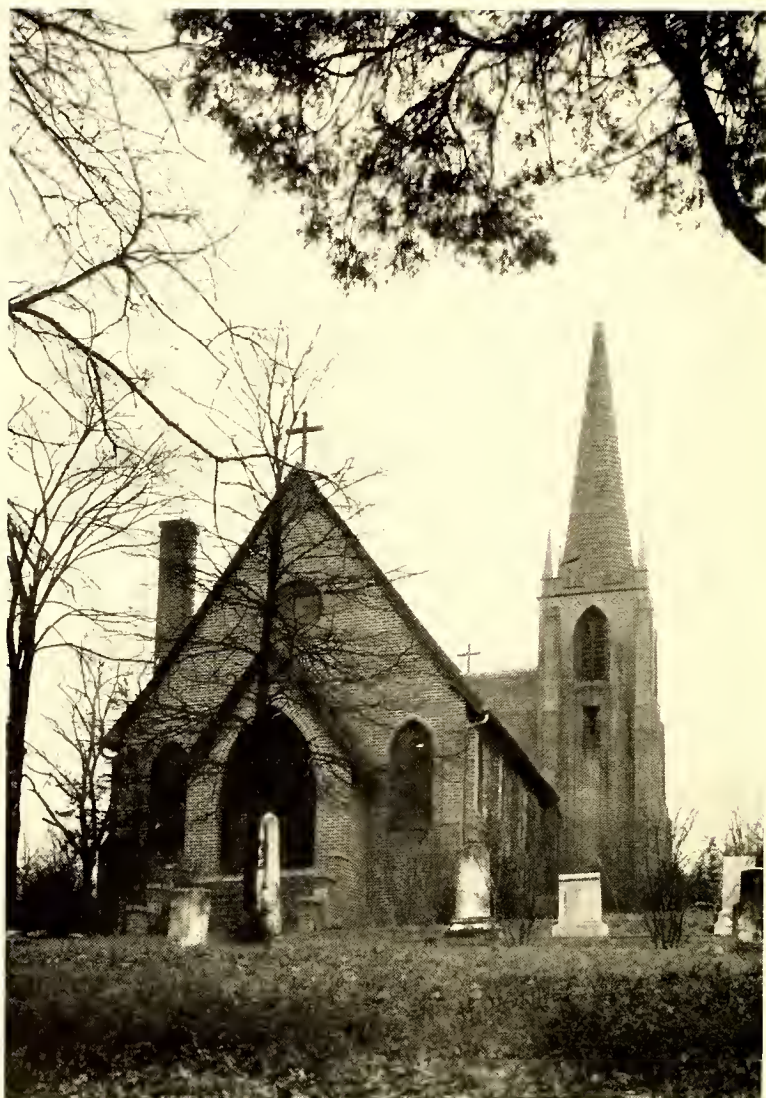
REV. FRANK BLOXHAM	<i>Rector</i>
MR. T. B. SMITH	<i>Senior Warden</i>
MR. GEORGE C. PAGE	<i>Junior Warden</i>
MR. W. E. GRIGG	<i>Treasurer</i>
MISS PANSY WOOD	<i>Secretary</i>

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MR. CLYDE TAYLOR	MR. A. E. MILLER
MR. LESTER MULLEN	MR. ZENAS MARTIN
MR. FRED KIZER	MR. WILSON BYERS

MISS WILHELMINA REES

MRS. CLYDE TAYLOR	<i>President of Woman's Auxiliary</i>
MR. FRED KIZER	<i>Superintendent of Church School</i>
MISS ELSIE MAE SUMMEY	<i>Secretary-Treasurer Church School</i>



ST. LUKE'S CHURCH IN LINCOLNTON, 1941.

History of ST. LUKE'S PARISH in Lincolnton

THE beginnings of the Episcopal Church in Lincoln County were near what is now known as Lowesville. There was a group of Church members there as early as 1736, organized into a congregation with an elected Vestry and ministered to by the Rev. Robert Miller, affectionately known as "Parson Miller." At that time there was no Bishop in the whole of North Carolina as the Diocese had not been organized. There is no direct record that Parson Miller ministered to Episcopalians in Lincolnton, but we may be reasonably sure that he did for we know that he held services from time to time at both Lenoir and Morganton.

The earliest traces we have of the existence of the Church in Lincolnton are to be found in the recorded missionary activities of the Rev. John Morgan who visited the place on two or three occasions as early as the year 1834. He preached a few times and baptized some children but this was never one of his regular Mission stations. Shortly after his visits Lincolnton was combined with other places as a permanent missionary field and the Rev. M. A. Curtis was appointed Missionary in Charge in 1835. He continued to serve the field for twelve months but the effect of his ministrations is not known. The records are exceedingly imperfect and no direct statement of facts is given as to the progress which the Church made. The probability, however, is that it was only few in number and feeble in power of sustaining the ministry.

The Rev. E. M. Forbes succeeded Mr. Curtis but at what precise time is not to be ascertained, as there is no

record of the date when he entered upon his services. From incidental services it seems that he must have commenced his ministry here some time early in 1841. It was on the 29th of November of this year that we find it stated that a number of the citizens of Lincolnton assembled together for the purpose of forming a congregation of the Episcopal Church. At this time the Parish must still have been in a feeble state as is evident from the fact that but twelve persons appear to have been present at the meeting which was held in the old Academy Building, now the Public Library. The congregation, however, was then and there duly formed, the original document drawn up and signed at the meeting is still in existence and part of the records of the Parish. It reads:

“We the undersigned do hereby agree to form a congregation at Lincolnton, N. C., for the public worship of Almighty God, according to the rites, forms and institutions of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States. We agree that the said congregation shall be known by the style and name of St. Luke’s Church in Lincolnton. We hereby consent to adopt and be governed by the Constitution and Canons of the Church in North Carolina, and the Constitution and Canons of the General Convention of the Church in the United States.”

Lincolnton, N. C.

29 November 1841

E. M. FORBES (Minister)

Signed:

D. REINHARDT,
JAMES M. LYTLE,
W. WILLIAMSON,
L. E. THOMPSON,
THOMAS M. HERNDON,
JEREMIAH W. MURPHY,
HAYWOOD W. GUION,
VARDRY A. MCBEE,
H. L. HICKS,
M. HOKE,
R. WILLIAMSON, JR.,
THOS. G. WILLIAMSON,
THOS. W. LYTLE.

At the Convention of the Diocese of North Carolina in 1842 the Church was received into full union with the Church at large. On the 9th of March in the same year the corner stone of the first St. Luke's Church was laid by the Rev. E. M. Forbes and on July 30th, 1843, the Church having been finished, was duly consecrated to the worship of Almighty God by the Rt. Rev. Levi Stillman Ives, Bishop of the Diocese.

The Rev. Mr. Forbes, the first Rector of St. Luke's continued to officiate till he was obliged to resign on February 18th, 1844, on account of ill-health. He was succeeded by the Rev. Aaron F. Olmstead, but the records do not state how long this minister served the Parish. After an intermission of one year, he was succeeded by the Rev. M. Huske in the month of May 1847.

There are few means of ascertaining the progress of the Parish during the ministrations of either of these Rectors. The Baptisms recorded are almost exclusively infant, and the Confirmations not exceeding forty or fifty; the communicants added not over the same number. It was under them, however, and particularly Mr. Forbes, that the Church acquired the greater part of whatever strength it may now possess.

On June 27th, 1851, the Rev. Mr. Huske resigned and the Parish remained vacant until March 1st, 1852, when he was succeeded by the Rev. Thomas S. W. Mott. It was at this time that Lincolnton became associated with Charlotte as a field of Missionary labor. On the succession of Mr. Mott the whole number of Parishioners including all ages was fifty-two exclusive of a few slaves; the communicants were twenty-one and the confirmed but non-communicating members numbered about twenty.

The Rev. Mr. Mott resigned said Parish some time in the Spring of 1854 after which it remained vacant

till November 12th the same year at which time the Rev. Horatio H. Hewitt succeeded. The Parish was still associated with St. Peter's in Charlotte.

The length of Mr. Hewitt's ministry to the Parish is not known but the records disclose that after a vacancy of some months it was served by the Rev. C. T. Bland in conjunction with his former charges at Rutherfordton and Shelby. He took over the work on January 1st, 1857. This arrangement continued until March 8th, 1857, when Mr. Bland resigned from St. John's, Rutherfordton.

Regular services were started once a month at Beatys Ford in July 1857. During the fall of 1858 the Church steeple had decayed so badly that it had to be removed. A subscription list was opened and sufficient gathered to rebuild the same in 1859. In the same year the Font was made and placed in the Church. A donation for this was given by Mrs. Mary Brent Smith, the stone by Mr. L. E. Thompson and the marble shaft by Mr. William Tiddy. The Rector also gave of his time and labor in its construction.

The Rev. C. T. Bland resigned from St. Luke's on December 1st, 1861.

The Parish then remained vacant till July 5th, 1862, and during this vacancy there were occasional services rendered by the Rev. G. M. Everhart of Charlotte.

The Rev. William Robards Wetmore took charge of the Parish as Deacon on July 5th, 1862. He was ordained to the Priesthood on St. Matthew's Day of the same year by Bishop Atkinson in St. Luke's Church and immediately assumed the Rectorship of the Parish.

Throughout the years St. Luke's has been the recipient of many valuable and useful gifts and it seems that right here is the opportune time to mention some of these. It is recorded in the minutes of the Vestry under date of Christmas Day, 1866:

“Whereas the Rev. John McVicar, D.D. of the Diocese of New York, and, until lately, Chaplain of St. Cornelius’ Chapel on Governor’s Island, has been pleased to present to St. Luke’s Church in Lincolnton a very beautiful and valuable communion service and other articles consisting of a Paten, Chalice, Alms Bason, a full set of altar Linen, Surplices, Stole and bands, an antique chest, and a picture of the above named edifice, built by him, to be held inalienable, as consecrated property; and also a number of Bibles, Prayer Books and Tracts. The congregation of said Church, through their Vestry, cannot but avail themselves of the opportunity given them by their benevolent benefactor of returning to him their most sincere thanks; and at the same time of assuring him that they fully appreciate the motive which induced the donation; and that the treasure will be held and prized by them, *in perpetuum*, as well in regard for the *giver* as the *gift*.

“It is ordered that the above, together with this Resolution, be transcribed in the Journal of the Church, and that a copy of the same be forwarded to him whose Christian benevolence has called it forth, and for whom peace on earth and blessed immortality hereafter they most earnestly make their supplications to the Throne of Grace.

“The Vestry, for themselves and their brethren of the Church, take occasion to add, that the motive which induced the gift, emanating at this time from *the North* gives them more than usual gratification.

Signed: L. E. THOMPSON, *Senior Warden*
J. M. RICHARDSON, *Junior Warden*
V. A. MCBEE
BENJ. H. SUMNER.”



INTERIOR, ST. LUKE'S CHURCH.

But to return to the history. It has been truly said that any institution is a projection and reflection of its guiding spirits and in a very real sense this is true of the Church under the leadership of Mr. Wetmore. He lived in his own house on South Cedar Street and taught school from time to time, first with Professor Smith in the Old Academy and in private and public schools at several places. He established the Mission known as St. Paul's, three miles north of Lincolnton. The land on which the chapel now stands was given by the old French bachelor, Mr. Ferrier, about 1870. Mr. Wetmore also had a Mission chapel called St. Stephen's, just over the river, later moved to the South of the City; and established a Mission of the Church of Our Savior, west of Lincolnton, known as Woodside. This latter work was at first for the slaves of the Woodside Plantation, but later became a Mission for the

white people of the community. The Mission chapel seems to have done its best work under the leadership of the Richardson family during their residence at Woodside. It is still a very strong Mission and only last year (1940) completed the erection of a new Church building. Three men in the Church's ministry have come from Woodside. The Rev. Charles Hoffman, the Rev. N. C. Duncan and the Rev. Boston M. Lackey. Other men who came into the ministry during Mr. Wetmore's long Rectorship and influence were and are the Rev. W. S. Bynum, the Rev. Vardry McBee, the Rev. Thomas Wetmore, C. R. Cody, Frontis Anthony, and Coachman Preston, the latter going to the Methodist Church. Mr. Wetmore instituted the Easter Sunrise Service of St. Luke's, which service has not failed since that time.

In addition to ministering to St. Luke's and its associated Missions, he ministered to the Mission at St. John's, High Shoals and began the work which is now St. Mark's Parish in Gastonia. Dr. Wetmore, for he later received the degree of D.D. from Sewanee, was a great walker as well as worker. It is said that he walked to Iron Station where he taught school. He was known to walk to Shelby for services there, he walked to Cherryville in the snow to baptize a child, on one occasion he went to High Shoals on horseback, the horse not proceeding sufficiently fast was hitched by the wayside and the Doctor proceeded on foot. The explanation later was that the horse became stubborn and so the Rector left him and went on.

During Dr. Wetmore's time in 1885 and 1886, the old St. Luke's Church which stood North and South, was replaced by the present structure, the tower of the old Church being retained as the South Trancept in the new building. Mr. Silas McBee, member of the

Parish and Vestry (who later became nationally known as the Editor of the *Churchman*, and internationally known as founder and editor of the *Constructive Quarterly*, he being a great advocate of Church Unity, especially with the Eastern Church) was the architect and builder, carving with his own hands the altar, reredos and credence table. Mr. John Cobb made the Bishop's chair and Mr. George Cauble and Mr. J. E. Love the Rood Screen, the carving being done by Mr. Love. It was through Mr. McBee that practically all of the stained glass windows were put in the Church. The last one in the Church near the tower door was placed in 1926 by the faculty and students of Fassifern School in memory of Mrs. Anna McBee, sister of Miss Kate Shipp, owner and principal of the school.

It is recorded that when the Vestry met to consider building a new Church there was no money, where-upon Mr. Vardry McBee moved that they appropriate fifty dollars on hand in the woman's missionary society accounts. The proposition carried and with this money lumber for the new Church was purchased, but soon the lumber caught fire and burned.

The new Church was completed and consecrated by Bishop Lyman in July 1886.

Dr. Wetmore's life seems to have been one of great usefulness and moral and spiritual uplift to the whole community. He is buried to the North of the Church in the cemetery where he so frequently officiated for others. The monument erected to his memory by his friends in 1907 is near Cedar Street.

The year 1904 seems to have been a bad one for the Parish for in it there died not only the Rector but Mr. Vardry McBee. It would be well for us to ponder over the resolutions passed by the Vestry on these occasions as they reveal in large measure what manner of men these were.

Mr. McBee died in February, 1904. The Vestry met and passed the following resolution: "Resolved: that, while this entire community remembers and mourns for Mr. McBee as an upright, patriotic and useful citizen, this Vestry desires to bear testimony to the large place he has ever held in connection with this Church and Parish.

"Mr. McBee was present and took part in the organization of the Parish, was a Vestryman of the Church for more than sixty years, for the greater part of this time secretary of the Vestry, and for the past seventeen years Senior Warden. For this entire period he was attentive to every duty, faithful to every trust, and at all times active and efficient in every work that was given him to do.

"The Pastor joins in stating, also, that he has ever grown in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, till he had filled out the full measure of a righteous and Christian life.

"Verily a Prince in Israel has been gathered to his fathers, and we here record our deep sense of loss to the Church, and our profound personal sorrow for his death."

But a month later the beloved Rector, Dr. Wetmore passed to his reward. Again the Vestry met to express its feeling of deep loss and the records give the following account of the meeting:

"Resolved that, in the death of our beloved Pastor, the Rev. W. R. Wetmore, D.D., this parish has sustained a loss that is well-nigh irreparable. Dr. Wetmore will be sorely missed in the community at large, as one who has always stood for righteousness and truth. His loss will be felt far and wide by a large company of men and women who were taught by him to face the world manfully and faithfully, and who owe largely to his

instruction the positions of honor and trust which they now hold. But we of St. Luke's Church, who were the objects of his particular care and love, feel that the loss to us is greater than to all. We have lost a guide and counsellor, a friend who never failed, a shepherd, who, without thought of self, ever gently and watchfully cared for his flock, and one who lived only for our good and the good of the Kingdom of Christ.

“Resolved: that we desire also to bear witness that, in the forty-two years of his pastorate, he never slighted his work or failed in his duty. The work he gave himself to do was more than ordinarily falls to the lot of two men; but he did it. The standard of duty he held was high, but he lived up to it, and his whole life was a spotless example of Christian purity and unselfishness. He was grievously afflicted in body and in continual pain for years; but he bore it all as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, never failing in the performance of his work, and finally dying in harness. Wherever he was known, the recollection of him is a benediction, and the names written in heaven of the many souls he brought to Christ remain an everlasting memorial of him.

“Truly, this was a man of God, and while our hearts are heavy with sorrow, we thank our God for him, for he was to us a bright example of all a Christian ought to be, and by following in his footsteps we too may find the peace of God which passeth all understanding.”

The Diocesan Convention met in St. Luke's in 1904, the vestry deciding to go ahead with the plans made before Mr. Wetmore's death.

After such a long tenure of office such as Dr. Wetmore's it would appear that the subsequent history of the Church is a story of a succession of ministers who stayed but a short time.

The Rev. D. T. Johnson became Rector after Dr. Wetmore's death and served as such for about three years. He was followed by the Rev. W. R. Dye in 1909 who stayed for five years. Short pastorates by the Rev. John H. Crosby and the Rev. C. P. Parker in 1914 and 1915 with intervening services by the Rev. B. S. Lassiter followed. In 1916 the Rev. C. E. Bentley, now Director of the American Church Institute for Negroes, became Rector of the Parish and remained in that capacity till late in 1920.

The present Rectory was built during the Rectorship of the Rev. W. R. Dye. The lot was given by Mrs. McBee and at the time was valued at five hundred dollars. The final payment on the Rectory debt was made out of funds raised for repairs to the Church property.

The Rev. Cyril Bentley was followed by the Rev. Sanders R. Guignard who began his work on April 1st, 1921.

In 1917, during the Rectorship of the Rev. C. E. Bentley, the Church was clothed in stucco, but it proved a failure and fell off badly. In 1923, during the Rectorship of the Rev. Sanders R. Guignard, the vestry decided to veneer the whole Church with red brick and white mortar with the result as the Church now appears. Having the advice of Mr. Slaughter of Raleigh, architect of Lincolnton Court House, then in process of erection, and the services of Mr. H. A. Kistler, contractor who had worked on the Church in 1886, and at this time a member of the vestry, and with contributions from the members of the Church, friends . . . and especially Mr. W. H. Truesdell, a friend of the Rector . . . the work was accomplished. The repairs included an entirely new roof, portico, much enlarged vestry room to allow space for an organ chamber,

repair of the windows providing ventilators in them, and painting of the whole Parish House and rectory. New roofs were also put on the Rectory and Parish House . . . all work done at a cost of about five thousand dollars. Mr. Harry Page was treasurer of this special building fund.

The furnace in the Church was later the gift of Mr. W. H. Truesdell.

In 1929 further repairs were executed on the Rectory at which time the building was underpinned.

The present organ was installed in the Church in 1933.

In 1925 the Church suffered a great loss in the death of one of its most honored sons. The resolutions of the Vestry set forth in a measure the service of this man to the Church and Parish. "We the Vestry desire to express our deep sense of loss to this Parish in the death of the Honorable Justice William Alexander Hoke, who for all his life was connected with St. Luke's . . . for many years a vestryman and sometime Senior Warden. He was one of Lincoln County's most honored citizens. Attorney at the Bar, Circuit Judge, for twenty years Associate Justice and for a time Chief Justice of the State Supreme Court of North Carolina. On his passing from this life in Raleigh on September 15, 1925 St. Luke's Parish and the State of North Carolina sustains a great loss. While we bow in submission to Almighty God in every act of His wise Providence, we thank Him for the lives of such men who have done good in their generation."

On the resignation of the Rev. S. R. Guignard in September 1929 the parish was left for some years without a permanent Rector. In the interim valuable help was rendered by the Rev. Boston M. Lackey, Rector at Lenoir, who so arranged his own work as to be able to give services, counsel and advice to the

congregation at Lincolnton. During this time services were also rendered by the Rev. Eugene Heald, Professor of Lenoir-Rhyne College and other ministers who could be obtained.

On July 1st, 1936, The Rev. John C. Grainger came to the Parish as Rector from Christ Church, Cambridge, Mass. His youthful zeal did much to awaken the interest of the people and due to his efforts there was a definite start made on work looking toward the erection of a new Church for Our Saviour, Woodside. He was responsible for gathering together the young people and other groups and starting a vigorous Church life in the Parish after so long a period without the guiding hand and help of a resident minister. His Rectorship was all too short as he resigned on September 1st, 1939, to become Rector of St. Stephen's Church, Goldsboro, N. C.

Again there was a short vacancy during which the Rev. Colin Campbell served as summer supply pastor. He worked arduously in Church and Missions and under his direction the new Church of Our Saviour, Woodside, was constructed. The present Rector, the Rev. Frank Bloxham took up his duties on October 1st, 1940.

In recent years the parish has been the recipient of other and useful gifts.

In 1937 the family of the late James T. Williams presented to the Church an altar Book, Linens, Stoles, books to start a Parish Library and other useful gifts in memory of their parents and in 1939 the same family presented a set of Eucharistic Vestments for the use of the Parish as a memorial to the life and work of Dr. Wetmore.

The silver bowl used in the font at the Sacrament of Baptism was given in 1940 by Lt.-Col. Wm. E. Shipp of Washington, D. C., for his aunt, the late Miss

Kate Shipp, in memory of Mrs. Day, a life friend of the family. It is a reproduction of an early American Sterling Silver Baptismal Bowl made in Boston by Wm. Cross about the year 1700, the original now being in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.

And so we close our story of the highlights of the history of St. Luke's during its first one hundred years of service. It is of interest to note, in closing, that in the Churchyard are buried, beside a number of the more prominent people of the Parish, four clergymen of the Church: the Rev. Mr. Bland, one of the first missionaries to this part of North Carolina; the Rev. Mr. Mott; the long time Rector, Dr. Wetmore, and the Rev. Frontis Anthony. The remains of a fifth, the Rev. Mr. Bynum, have been moved to Fletcher. There is also buried there the Rev. Mr. Barr, a Presbyterian minister, there is the body of Lieutenant Shipp, killed in the Cuban War; and that of a U. S. Army officer shot in ambush near Lincolnton just after the civil war, and that of General Ramseur.

While St. Luke's has furnished, beside her eight or nine men for the ministry, a number of prominent men of Lincolnton's professional and business life, she has grown but slowly for the reason that so many of her sons have moved to larger cities and lives of greater influence. The records of men in public office in State and Nation carry the names of some who have gone forth from this Parish.

We step forward into the future with faith and courage knowing that He who has led us thus far on our way will continue with His guidance and Blessing. The memory of the past shall be to us a constant reminder that only as we venture great things despite discouragements and seeming obstacles are we to build on the foundations laid by those to whom, in the beginning, we dedicated this work.

To all to whom this history comes we ask your support in the raising of our Centennial Fund of

TEN THOUSAND DOLLARS

This Fund will be used for the repair and renovation of our Church Property.

- a. Underpinning of the Parish House.
- b. Rewiring and re-lighting of the Parish House.
- c. Redecoration of the Parish House.
- d. Furnace for the Parish House.
- e. Furnace for the Rectory.
- f. Interior remodelling and redecoration of the Rectory.
- g. Brick veneering of the Rectory.

It is suggested that gifts be in multiples of one hundred

One Hundred Dollars
One Hundred Half Dollars
One Hundred Quarters
One Hundred Dimes
One Hundred Cents

It is our desire to announce on November 30th at our Thanksgiving Service that the entire sum has been raised.

Any money over and above that needed for the above purposes will be placed in the general operating funds of the Church, which in themselves need supplementary aid.

Please send your check TODAY. We propose to do the above work only as the money is received and we will incur *no debts*.

Checks may be mailed to the Rev. Frank Bloxham, St. Luke's Rectory, Lincolnton, and all donations will be acknowledged.

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This book may be kept out one month unless a recall notice is sent to you. It must be brought to the North Carolina Collection (in Wilson Library) for renewal.
